

The Mazaroff Mystery

—By—
J. S. FLETCHER

Illustrations by IRWIN MYERS
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W. N. U. Service

THE STORY

Mervyn Holt is engaged by a man calling himself Mazaroff as a traveling companion. After a short tour they put up at the Woodcock Inn on Marrasdale moor. They meet, casually, Mrs. Elphinstone and Sheila Merchison. Mazaroff tells Holt they are his wife and daughter and that his real name is Merchison. That night Mazaroff fails to return to the inn and his disappearance is unexplained. Holt meets Sheila and tells her of Mazaroff's disappearance. Holt is questioned by Police Sergeant Manners and a reporter, Bowen. Mazaroff's murdered body is found. Crole, Mazaroff's lawyer, and Maythorne, private detective, arrive. Valuable diamonds that Mazaroff usually carried are missing. A gun, stolen from Musgrave, is found at the scene of the murder. Evidence at the inquest proves Mazaroff was Merchison. Holt will leave all to Holt. Herman Kleop, close friend of Mazaroff, is in London. From him it is learned that Mazaroff possessed two remarkable diamonds, which he had offered for sale to Lord and Lady Loeke. Loeke says Mazaroff had one of the stones and his agent, Armintrude, the other.

CHAPTER V—Continued

"There you are," he said. "James Mallison, no occupation, Park lane—which seems to argue that Mr. Mallison lives with his aunt and his uncle-in-law. But perhaps Cottingley knows? Cottingley knows a lot! Do you know anything about Mallison, Cottingley?"

"Very little! Young man about town. A bit—foppish. Sporty—in a way. Lives with Sir Samuel and Lady Loeke. They say this Mallison will come in for Sir Samuel's money."

"And that's all you know, Cottingley?"

"All!"

Maythorne threw the scrapbook on the table.

"Well, that's that!" he said. "We know a bit more now about Mallison. Doubtless he's the man Mazaroff spoke of at Huntingdon and at York. Now, there's nothing much in that, but it seems that Mallison was going north. And what I'd like to know is this—did he and Mazaroff ever meet again? What we want to get at is the relationship of Mazaroff's murder to the fact that Mazaroff had Blue Diamond Number Two on him when he was murdered. How many people know that he had? Well, from all we can make out, here was a man—Mallison—who certainly knew it. Mallison had seen the blue diamond—Number Two—in Mazaroff's possession. Probably, when they encountered at Huntingdon and at York, the blue diamond deal with Sir Samuel Loeke was the subject of their conversation. We'll have to get and talk with Mallison, certainly. And—Armintrude? That man has got to be seen, too—he knows more than he's told; in fact, he's told nothing. And in the meantime, he must be carefully watched. Holt—is that man you left at the Woodcock, the chauffeur, Webster, a man of good intelligence?"

"Webster's a sharp, clever chap," I answered. "Smart—trusty."

"Give me some telegraph forms, Cottingley," said Maythorne. "Holt, I'm going to send Webster a wire in your name, telling him of certain things I want him to do there as regards keeping an eye on High Cap Lodge. We shall have to go back there, I expect, but it mayn't be tomorrow. As for tomorrow, will you two come here at ten o'clock in the morning?"

"Orie and I went away, leaving Maythorne concocting his telegram to Webster.

I bought the evening newspapers and went off to Jermyn street, resolved on going to bed at exactly nine o'clock. I should have kept my resolution if, just as I was about to make the definite move backward, Maythorne had not turned up.

"I've seen Sir Samuel Loeke, again, Holt," he said. "I've found out a certain fact that may or may not be relevant. About this chap Mallison, of course."

"Yes?" I said.

"Mallison," continued Maythorne, "went up north just about the time you and Mazaroff did. Old Loeke wants to rent a shooting next year—grouse moor, you know—and he thought it would be a good notion if Mallison went and inspected some shootings while guns were actually at work. From what he told me, I'm pretty dead certain that Mallison was in the immediate neighborhood of Marrasdale at the very time you and Mazaroff reached the Woodcock Inn. Eh?"

"I saw that he expected me to make some comment. I had no comment to make; all I could say was that I had never seen anything of Mallison in these regions. He smiled.

"Why, no?" he answered. "Of course you didn't—or, I might say, wouldn't, if—but still, that's all in the clouds. Yet—Mallison was certainly there or thereabouts."

"I wonder if we shall ever find out all about it?" I said.

"He gave me a queer, knowing look. We shall find out all about it, Holt," he replied. "And—when we do, there'll be a fine surprise! Look here!

Do you remember that when we were at Reiver's den I picked up something close by where Mazaroff's body was found? You do? Well, now—"

He broke off short. Somebody was knocking, gently but persistently, at my outer door. I walked out of the room, across the little hall, and opened the door—to stand back amazed. Sheila stood there—alone!

CHAPTER VI

How Was It Got?

Her name sprang to my lips involuntarily as I stood there, staring at her. She laughed, half shyly, as I let it out, but she was more collected than I, and she stepped into the hall as readily as if there were nothing strange in this—to me—surprising visit. I had left the door of the sitting room open; she glanced through and saw Maythorne, and her first words were businesslike enough.

"You're Mr. Maythorne then? That's better!" she said. "Well—I followed her into the room and closed the door. Maythorne had jumped to his feet; for a second or two



"Yes," She Answered, "I Know a Lot More Than That."

the three of us stood gazing at each other. As for myself, I felt utterly at a loss; Maythorne was quite calm. He drew a chair in front of the fire, silently motioning Sheila to sit.

"Miss Merchison is here because—something has happened," he said. "Exactly!"

She thrust her hand into some inner pocket and drew out a folded paper. As quietly as if she were giving me an ordinary letter to read she held it out to me.

"Mr. Maythorne is right," she said. "Something has happened. That's the will! I brought it to you—myself."

I gave one glance at the signature at its foot—here, without doubt, was the will, made at York, of which Postlethwaite had spoken at the inquest. I handed it across to Maythorne.

"Where did you get this, Miss Merchison?" he asked.

The answer came promptly and sharply—with a certain hardness of tone.

"Stole it?" From—whom?"

"No use beating about the bush, new! I stole it from my own mother!"

Maythorne and I exchanged glances; Sheila looked from one to the other.

"I dare say you've heard, perhaps known, of cases where daughters have had to tell the truth about their own mothers, Mr. Maythorne?" she said.

"Well—whether it's wrong or not, I'm going to tell the truth about mine. I stole that will from her this morning, because I knew she'd no right whatever to be in possession of it, and when I'd got it, I jumped on my bicycle and made off to Black Gill Junction, and caught the next train going south—to hand it over! If I hadn't, who knows what would have become of it?"

"Yes?" said Maythorne. "Exactly. But—you know a lot more than that, Miss Merchison. And—we three are alone."

She put her fingers together in her lap—I noticed they trembled a little.

"Yes," she answered. "I know a lot more than that. Let me tell you, for it's no use denying it, that my mother is one of those women who love money—money, to her, means all sorts of things—never mind what. I saw from the beginning that as soon as it was put into her mind that Mazaroff was really Merchison, the idea of getting hold of his fortune began to shape itself."

"Well, I didn't know what my mother might do; I don't know now, I tell you both, and at once, what she has done—I only know that somehow or other she became possessed of that will, and that I've stolen it from her and given it up to you. That came about in this way. Night before last, fatish in the evening, my mother did a most unusual thing for her. Some little time after dinner, she went out, saying that she was going to see an old man who was lying ill in the village. Now, my mother is not by no means an anxious sort about old men and

women who are ill and I was surprised that she should take so much trouble in this particular instance. I told you both I suspected something then, but I didn't know what! Could I help it?"

"Go on," said Maythorne, quietly. "Tell us everything."

"Well, last night, the same thing occurred again," continued Sheila. "She went out, on the same excuse, and she was away still longer. I heard her come in—I went to see if there was anything I could do for her. And it was then I made a discovery. She was in the inner library. I saw her through the curtains that shut it off from the big library. There was a small lamp on the table in the center; she stood by it examining a sheet of paper. And—I don't know if it was intuition, or what—it flashed across my mind that what she was looking at was the missing will! So—well, then I watched her—I'll confess it. She read the paper through, folded it up, looked round, and then went over to one of the bookcases, and slipped the paper into a big volume in a corner. Then I went off—and I didn't sleep. I knew there was mischief. It was certain—dead certain—that paper was the will, wherever and however she had got it. And in the middle of the night I got up, and went down, and got the paper out in the dark, and then just struck a match—and of course one glance was enough. I put it back, and went back to bed. And then there was no sleep. I felt—oh, I don't know what I felt! There was devilry somewhere—close at hand. My own mother or not—what business had she with that will? Where did she get it? By what means? Was she mixed up with—but I didn't dare to think about what she might be mixed up with. What I did realize was this—the probability was that if the will remained in her possession, she'd destroy it, and then—well then, all sorts of things would happen that I didn't want to happen. And so I determined to take matters into my own hands. I got up early. I took the will, got on my bicycle, and set off for Black Gill Junction—it was still dark when I set out. I got down to Carlisle—and then, of course, it was plain sailing up to town. And—you've got the will!"

"You're a good lucked 'un!" Maythorne said, with obvious admiration. "You know at any rate how to act without hesitation. Well—this is a queer tale, Holt. How does it strike you?"

"It may be," I answered, "that Mrs. Elphinstone could give a perfectly proper and valid explanation as to how she became possessed of the will."

Sheila turned on me like a flash. "Mervyn!" she exclaimed. "I believe you think I should have asked her that before I stole the will and ran off with it—to you!"

"No—no!" I protested. "I believe you do—I believe you do!" she exclaimed. "A pretty fool I should have been if I'd as much as let her know that I knew it was there! I know what would have happened if I'd told her that I knew what was hidden in the book! She'd have burned it before my very eyes. I know! No!—knowing what I did, there was only one thing to do, and that was to place it in safety."

"Miss Merchison's right," said Maythorne. "That was the only thing to do. And here it is, and tomorrow morning I'll hand it over to Crole. Mind you, Miss Merchison, your mother, as Holt suggests, may have a perfectly good explanation as to how she got the will. But, under the circumstances, you took the best step you could."

Sheila jumped up, suddenly, and began to button her coat.

"Then that's all right," she said. "I've done my bit, anyway—and now I'm off—I'll sleep tonight."

"Where are you going?" I asked as Maythorne and I rose. "Wherever it is, you must let me see you there, safely!"

"Oh, you can do that," she answered, half-carelessly. "I'm going to my old school friend, Rhoda Apperley. She lives in a flat of her own in Ashington mansions, in Malda Vale. I'm all right—but you can get me a taxi and ride there with me if you like."

"And tomorrow, in the morning," said Maythorne, "let Holt call for you and bring you to my office. And by the-by, before we go out, I've got something in my pocket, Miss Merchison, that I'd like to show you. Come to the light."

Suddenly, from some inner pocket, he produced and laid on the table in the full glare of the lamp, an old-fashioned cairngorm brooch, set in fine, much-worn silver. He looked closely at Sheila.

"Have you ever seen that before?" he asked. "Think!"

"No!" replied Sheila. "Never! Whose is it?—What is it?"

Maythorne picked up the brooch, and began to finger it. Turning it over, he pointed to the pin at the back, which was considerably worn, and fitted loosely to its socket.

"It would easily slip out of any woman's gown," he said. "And—I picked it up at Reiver's den, close to the spot where Mazaroff's dead body was found."

She turned on him a quick, questioning glance that shifted from him to the brooch, and he picked up the brooch again, and restored it to his pocket.

"So—to the best of your recollection—you've never seen it before?" he said.

"Never!" she repeated. "Never!" Presently we all three went downstairs, and into the street. I got a taxicab, and Sheila and I got into it. Maythorne said good-night and went off; we, too, set out on our ride to Malda Vale. She suddenly laughed shyly.

"Mervyn!" she said. "Were—were you glad to see me?"

"Will it be an answer," said I, "if I tell you that I'd been thinking about you all the evening?"

"That's a nice answer," she laughed. "Oh, well—now don't let's talk—we'll talk tomorrow, or next day, or some other day. But you can hold my hand, if you like, till we get to the end of the ride."

We held each other's hands—in silence—all the way to Malda Vale. I saw her safely in charge of her friend, and went back home in the same cab. Wondering, of course—wondering . . . what next?

My mother is not by no means an anxious sort about old men and women who are ill and I was surprised that she should take so much trouble in this particular instance. I told you both I suspected something then, but I didn't know what! Could I help it?"

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Daddy's Evening Fairy Tale

MARY GRAHAM BONNER
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A STRANGE CREATURE

The creature I'm going to tell you about came from South Africa.

"Good-morrow," said Maxwell Malhol Galago to his brother, Mansfield. "Do you know that we are distant relatives of the Lemur family and they are related to the monkey family?" asked Maxwell.

"I don't know and I can't say that I care whether I do or not," said Mansfield.

"Oh dear," said Maxwell, "there passes a bug. I must have him." He caught the bug and ate it.

"I'll have the next one, Brother Maxwell," said Mansfield. "Your home is as untidy as mine is," said Mansfield. "You find a forked branch so that two sides of your house are built without much trouble and you get some old sticks, dried leaves and any other old stuff you can find to finish it off with."

"You don't bother about housekeeping, nor does your mate. I can see that."

"What's the use in fussing?" asked Mansfield. "As long as I have a place to eat and sleep, that is all I care about."

"Of course I don't build a large enough home as a rule, for when the little ones come not long ago I had to move out—there wasn't room for



Eating, Sleeping, Doing Nothing.

all of us, and I didn't think it was gentlemanly to turn Mrs. Mansfield out.

"But later on the little ones found their own homes, and built them, so I moved back once more."

"You think just the same as I do," said Maxwell, "and you do just the same, too."

"I have heard of creatures who were forever fussing about their homes, dusting, finding pretty things and bothering all the time."

"Really they get all tired out, and why, may I ask?"

"You may ask, but I can't tell you," said Mansfield, "for I do not understand such people."

"I feel sleepy," said Maxwell, "it is bedtime." So he went back to his own home, folded his two huge and very peculiar ears behind his head and slept for a long time.

When he woke up he had a meal of insects.

"Eating, sleeping, doing nothing, are the only things in the world I believe in," he said to Mansfield when he came to return his call later on.

"I agree," said Mansfield. "Ah yes, I see, you are just as untidy as I am—every bit of it."

"My, but what a looking home you have got! It's quite too terrible for words, and I think that is the right sort to have."

"Ah, to be lazy, to do nothing, what joy it is!"

"We are supposed to be as lazy as any creatures living," said Maxwell. "Good!" said Mansfield. "I am glad people and creatures know we have good sense."

"But we wouldn't like them all to follow our example," said Maxwell. "We will let them work, for there is work to be done in the world, only we don't want to know of it."

"We don't want to know of it, and we don't want to do it," said Mansfield, "but most especially we don't want to do it—and we won't!"

And they each shook paws on it, and each ate a leaf full of insects.

Bar the Door
Here is a good playground game. Draw a base or den at each end of the ground, then all the players but one go into one of the dens. This player takes his stand in the middle of the ground, and calls to any player he chooses by name. As soon as he is named, this player must run across to the den; that is if he can, for of course, the "out" player tries to catch him as he crosses. If he succeeds in getting in, however, he calls "A bar," and every one on the opposite side runs across to join him.

The "out" player begins to count while they run, one, two, three, four, to ten; and if all the players are in the den by the time ten is reached that side scores one.

Any who are not safely across are liable to be caught by the "out" player; and if he manages to catch any one, that player must stand with him in the middle, helping to catch the others, two of the opposite side being named. Should no one be caught, the same "out" player must again do duty. Every time a called player gets across to the den he must shout "A bar."

THE KITCHEN CABINET

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"Are your shoulders bowed by trouble? Do your worries seem to double? Shift the burden. Of the cares that you are bearing—Responsibilities you're sharing—Not a one is worth the sharing. Shift the burden."

COOKERY SUGGESTIONS

Desserts, cakes and cookies which may be made, put into the ice chest and baked the next day or a few baked during a period of several days will give the family fresh, delightful food at a small cost of time.

Ice Box Cookies.—Boll two and two-thirds cupsful of sugar, one-third cupful of maple sirup and one-half cupful

of butter; cool, add one beaten egg, two teaspoonfuls of vanilla, four cupfuls of pastry flour, four teaspoonfuls of baking powder, sifted several times with the flour to blend it, one teaspoonful of salt, one cupful of chopped nuts. Mix and make into rolls, lay on a cloth and place in the ice box. Cut and bake as many as are needed for the day. Remove them at once when baked or they will stick to the pan.

Delicate White Cakes.—This is a recipe which makes a loaf or a two-layer cake, always fine-grained and tender of crumb. Take two cupfuls of sifted pastry flour, three teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one-half cupful of butter, one cupful of sugar, three-fourths of a cupful of milk, one teaspoonful of vanilla and three eggs whites beaten stiff. Cream the butter, add the sugar, then the flour well sifted with the baking powder alternately with the milk. Fold in the stiffly beaten whites at the last with the flavoring. Bake one hour in a loaf, or twenty to twenty-five minutes if in layer tins.

Devil's Food Cake.—This is another reliable recipe that will always turn out well: Melt six ounces of bitter chocolate, one cupful of brown sugar, one-half cupful of milk; melt in the top of a double boiler, adding the sugar and milk; cool. Sift two cupfuls of pastry flour, one teaspoonful of soda three times. Cream one-half cupful of butter or any sweet fat, add one cupful of brown sugar and beat until light and fluffy. Now add two eggs, unbeaten, one at a time—beat well, then add the melted chocolate mixture and beat well. Add the flour and three-fourths of a cupful of milk alternately, a small amount at a time, beating well. Add one teaspoonful of vanilla and bake in layers. This makes three nine-inch layers. Bake thirty minutes. An orange filling for this cake is especially well liked.